

MIDDLE GRADE EXCERPT – GIRLS I LOVE BEST BY JOYCE GERBER

Ann

**Summary:** My fifty-thousand word count novel is the story of twelve-year old Gabby, six years after her parent's divorce. Gabby tells the story of the year her mom changed her family, again, with a boyfriend named Mike and a sister named Annie.

**Flying Home**

My name's Gabby.

I'm twelve.

My parents are divorced.

unclear

Some people think that means I'm some kinda kid, you know, a kid of divorce means you're doomed. Your life is over because your parents can't get along. } really?? I can see Gabby feeling like that but other kids? Seems extreme.

It's not good, don't get me wrong, but divorce happens. What I know is that it doesn't have to be <sup>break</sup> the thing that is you; it's just something that happens in this life. My mom says mistakes can make a life. She wrote a song for her fourth album with that title.

That's what I know, now. But I didn't always.

I was only six when my parents split. Things weren't great in my house, but what did I know, I was only a kid. And I didn't have a brother or a sister to talk to about how I felt.

? is that a word?

When me and my dad and ~~my~~ mom lived in Boston, our house was the funnest on the street. Mom <sup>'s</sup> the singer in a band, and after I was born they moved the studio to our house so she could be home ~~x~~ more. There were always people around and music playing, and to me it was like living in a magic land. } I don't see ~~how~~ a lot of people + music playing makes it magic - doesn't seem that out of the ordinary to me as described. To Dad, it felt a little different.

He was finishing a degree in theology at Harvard, but he took care of me. <sup>unclear</sup> I had a few babysitters, who I liked a lot. There was Betty and Kelly and Cheri and Christina and Tori, but I liked it best when Dad was home. } this list of names is meaningless

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Awkward transition - I was expecting to learn why she likes it best when her father is home.

My parents fought about everything; the music being too loud, the strangers in our house, and how Dad didn't have enough time to get his work done. Mom was away so much. But the real fights, the ones that mattered, were always about me.

[I used to think my parents fought all the time because my mom is so dramatic and my dad is so calm.] They are like oil and water, or fire and ice, or good and evil. And whatever it was that drew them together, it also ruined my family.

in that sense? unclear  
again, awkward transition - I was expecting specifics on fights about her.  
that's good  
but this isn't; too generalized

The last fight they had, the one that ended it all, <sup>happened</sup> came the day ~~after~~ Mom left me at home.

~~She~~ forgot ~~it~~ it was her day to take me to school. <sup>and left me home alone.</sup> Dad left first that morning, then Mom got up and left, too. No one woke me up ~~and~~ when I came down to breakfast, the kitchen was empty so I just made myself a bowl of cereal and read a book. I was okay, really, until Dad got home and found me there, <sup>obvious</sup> ~~unexpectedly~~.

He wasn't calm when he called Mom. <sup>try to come up with something fun + exciting, whatever. He came how + found her doing what? If she's only 6, she could get into real trouble.</sup>

When Mom got home I was sent upstairs.

From the top of the staircase I couldn't see them in the kitchen, but I heard every single word. I sat with my knees held tight to my chest and my pink, fuzzy blankie stuffed under my nose. I remember that the hallway felt cold and dark and I wanted to wrap my pink blankie around my heart. I didn't understand what was going on, and I felt really scared sitting there, all alone.

<sup>"Dad yelled"</sup> Dad said, "How could you have forgotten her, ~~today?~~ Are you so important that our only real responsibility, our daughter, slips your mind? What is wrong with you!"

really??  
I don't believe a kid would think that.

I remember wanting to disappear under my blankie. <sup>really?</sup> ~~that~~ just doesn't sound like a 6 yr old to me

<sup>"Mom shouted back."</sup> Mom said, "What do you do all day? You shouldn't need me to babysit her."

but I could be wrong

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~~Dad said,~~ <sup>That's</sup> "What do you do ~~all that is~~ so much more important than her? More important than us?" *Give him an action - maybe break something?*

~~From the top of the stairs I heard the words that changed my family forever.~~ *show it don't tell it*

~~My mom~~ didn't say ~~that~~ she was sorry for forgetting me. She didn't say ~~that~~ we were the most important people in her life. She didn't <sup>even to</sup> seem remember that she'd forgotten us so many other times that year.

Instead <sup>she</sup> my mom said, "I spend my days making money."

~~Then, there was silence.~~ Dad didn't say a word. *OR WHATEVER. MAKE SURE CAN HEAR HIM LEAVE THE KITCHEN, OR EVEN THE HOUSE.*

~~That was the last fight.~~

That was the fight that ended my family.

In the middle of first grade Dad took me on a plane across the country to live with my Zaydie, my grandfather, in Seattle. ~~and~~ we left Mom, by herself, in Boston.

I remember holding Mom's legs, standing in front of the ticket counter in the airport. She wasn't crying, when I looked up through my tears <sup>too vague - I think you need to be more specific here, so as to give the reader a clue as to what kind of person she is.</sup> Her face was hard to read. Dad told me to say good-bye and that <sup>wed</sup> ~~to~~ call her when we got to Seattle.

Mom's long blond hair was pulled back into a loose ponytail, and she wasn't wearing any make-up, <sup>where does this come from:</sup> that day Mom, well, she's a lot of things I don't want to be, but she is beautiful, on the

*this really bothers me - It's too mature for a 6 yr old + I don't like when it implies for a 12 yr old, unless you mean for her to hate her mother.*  
*←* outside.) Even then, in the airport, on <sup>a</sup> the day that couldn't have been good for her either, she looked so pretty. ~~and~~ I can still see ~~the~~ people, ~~the~~ ~~blurs~~ ~~around~~ ~~us~~, stopping, for just a second, to look at her. *It's not enough to ~~say~~ ~~she's~~ ~~blonde~~ ~~and~~ of a description to say "pretty."*

Trying to say the word good-bye is surprisingly hard when you're six and (nothing seems right.) *if she's crying that hard, she's certainly making a sound!* couldn't get my mouth to make any sound. I was crying so hard that people in the airport

*Vague - you need to nail down exactly what it is that doesn't seem "right."*

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were turning to look at us, not just Mom. Mom kept saying, "Gabby, it's okay. You have to go. I love you." But I could barely breathe when I turned and ran back to my dad.

*feels awkward. first everyone was looking cause she mother was so pretty then cause she kid is crying. It's as though they're the center of attention in an entire airport.*

Dad pulled me up into his arms, and we walked through the airport security. I never looked back in Mom's direction.

*Why? Mom is where?*

It was the worst day of my life,

Until this summer, when something happened that made me rethink everything I'd ever thought about my mom and me and love.

*I'm not qualified to comment on MG but this felt generalized to me.*

Susan

12:02

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*Summary: My fifty-thousand word count novel is the story of twelve-year old Gabby, six years after her parent's divorce. Gabby tells the story of the year her mom changed her family, again, with a boyfriend named Mike and a sister named Annie.*

**Flying Home**

My name's Gabby.

I'm twelve.

My parents are divorced.

Some people think that means I'm some kinda kid, you know, a kid of divorce means you're doomed. Your life is over because your parents can't get along.

It's not good, don't get me wrong, but divorce happens. What I know is that it doesn't have to be the thing that is you; it's just something that happens in this life. My mom says mistakes can make a life. She wrote a song for her fourth album with that title.

That's what I know, now. But I didn't always.

I was only six when my parents split. Things weren't great in my house, but what did I know. I was only a kid. And I didn't have a brother or a sister to talk to about how I felt.

When me and my dad and my mom lived in Boston, our house was the funnest on the street. Mom is the singer in a band, and after I was born, they moved the studio to our house so she could be home more. There were always people around and music playing, and to me it was like living in a magic land.

To Dad, it felt a little different.

Two weeks before it was over, my mom was practicing with the band. Dad was trying to study, etc etc then go into a scene here that is more of a tell than show. In this scene, through

**Comment [s1]:** I think it's great up to here. I love the voice, and I'm definitely pulled in.

**Comment [s2]:** I think you can summarize up to here (so far, this story is telling, not showing). But now, move into a specific scene. To Dad, it felt a little different. That's okay, but now let's move into real time, even if it's just for this chapter. I'd start here and go into a scene just prior to the fight, maybe what it's like with the music in the house, and the father trying to study (that's how we'll find out about the degree-through conversation), and a glimpse of what your mother is like. He said, she said...and interject with what your thoughts are at each step.

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dialogue, we can find out that he's getting his degree, that his mother is a singer, etc etc He was finishing a degree in theology at Harvard, but he took care of me. I had a few babysitters, who I liked a lot. There was Betty and Kelly and Cheri and Christina and Tori, but I liked it best when Dad was home.

My parents fought about everything; the music being too loud, the strangers in our house, and how Dad didn't have enough time to get his work done. Mom was away so much. But the real fights, the ones that mattered, were always about me.

I used to think my parents fought all the time because my mom is so dramatic and my dad is so calm. They are like oil and water, or fire and ice, or good and evil. And whatever it was that drew them together, it also ruined my family.

The last fight they had, the one that ended it all, came the day after Mom left me at home. She'd forgotten it was her day to take me to school. Dad left first that morning, then Mom got up and left, too. No one woke me up, and when I came down to breakfast, the kitchen was empty so I just made myself a bowl of cereal and read a book. I was okay, really, until Dad got home and found me there, unexpectedly.

He wasn't calm when he called Mom.

When Mom got home I was sent upstairs.

From the top of the staircase I couldn't see them in the kitchen, but I heard every, single word. I sat with my knees held tight to my chest and my pink, fuzzy blankie stuffed under my nose. I remember that the hallway felt cold and dark and I wanted to wrap my pink blankie around my heart. I didn't understand what was going on, and I felt really scared sitting there, all alone.

**Comment [s3]:** For example, in the conversation between the parents, he can stomp down the stairs and start yelling at his wife to be quiet, he's trying to study for a theology exam, etc, and she can yell something back. One of them can say something about the sitters, how they never last, or how they are there more than the mother... but all in the conversation. That will draw the reader in, maybe a reader who is a child of divorce and nods his/her head remembering when his/her parents fought about the sitters, etc. That will bring in the personalities of each parent.

**Comment [s4]:** Turn into a short scene and then move into the argument.

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Dad said, “How could you have forgotten her today? Are you so important that our only real responsibility, our daughter, slips your mind? What is wrong with you!”

I remember wanting to disappear under my blankie.

Mom said, “What do you do all day, you shouldn’t need me to babysit her.”

Dad said, “What do you do all that is so much more important than her? More important than us?”

From the top of the stairs I heard the words that changed my family forever.

My mom didn’t say that she was sorry for forgetting me. She didn’t say that we were the most important people in her life. She didn’t seem remember that she’d forgotten us so many other times that year.

Instead my mom said, “I spend my days making money.”

Then, there was silence.

That was the last fight.

That was the fight that ended my family.

In the middle of first grade, Dad took me on a plane across the country to live with my Zaydie, my grandfather, in Seattle. And we left Mom, by herself, in Boston.

I remember holding Mom’s legs, standing in front of the ticket counter in the airport, clutching my mom’s legs. I was crying nonstop, all the snot (okay I can’t stand that word but it works-or something like this) running down my face, my mother trying to pull me off (or hug her, or something). She wasn’t crying, though. She wasn’t crying, when I looked up through my tears. Her face was hard to read. Dad told me to say good-bye and that I’d call her when we got to Seattle.

Comment [s5]: I wasn’t sure what this meant. Because the father was in school and not working?

Comment [s6]: Is the middle of first grade the day after the fight? I’m not sure how much time passed between the fight and the flight across the country, but I’d make it back-to-back just to simplify things.

Comment [s7]: Not something a child would think

Comment [s8]: Did the daughter wonder why her mother wasn’t crying? Maybe she says, Won’t you miss me, Mommy? Mommy, I don’t want to leave you...etc etc...Interject dialogue here. This is an important scene and it should be step-by-step.

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Mom’s long blond hair was pulled back into a loose ponytail, and she wasn’t wearing any make-up that day. Mom, well, she’s a lot of things I don’t want to be, but she is beautiful, on the outside. Even then, in the airport, on the day that couldn’t have been good for her either, she looked so pretty. And I can still see the people, the blurs around us, stopping, for just a second, to look at her.

Comment [s9]: good

Formatted: Highlight

Comment [s10]: At this point, the child is crying, so I think people are just turning to look at both of them, not just the mother.

Trying to say the word good-bye is surprisingly hard when you’re six and nothing seems right. I couldn’t get my mouth to make any sound. I was crying so hard that people in the airport were turning to look at us, not just Mom. Mom kept saying, “Gabby, it’s okay. You have to go. I love you.” But I could barely breathe when I turned and ran back to my dad.

Formatted: Highlight

Comment [s11]: Again, step by step.

Dad pulled me up, into his arms, and we walked through the airport security. I never looked back in Mom’s direction.

It was the worst day of my life.

Until this summer, when something happened that made me rethink everything I’d ever thought about my mom and me and love.

Comment [s12]: This is a good lead-in to the next chapter.

Overall, I love the voice, and that is often the hardest thing to nail. You’ve got an interesting setup and a lot to work with. As I mentioned in my comments, I’d like to see you expand these into full scenes and cut down on the telling portions. Would be interested in reading a re-write and beyond.



**MIDDLE GRADE EXCERPT – GIRLS I LOVE BEST BY JOYCE GERBER** DAVE

*This story is only too common in today's society. Perhaps, there's the problem. I'm afraid there's too much that has been done before. Adults get divorced. Kids suffer. And that's a shame but it happens all the time. If you want to make this a story that keeps the reader interested, you have to set up a situation that keeps the reader guessing. In the first pages, the reader can pretty much guess what is going to happen next. Sorry.*

*The six-year-old confusion comes across quite clearly. Maybe you could delve into the misery her parents were going through. Clearly they had different life goals and neither was able to make an adjustment.*

*I may be off base, but it seems that your description, largely, puts the blame for the split on mom. If that's so, can you dial it back some? The worst statement was that she was the one making money. How does dad deal with that? In the story as written, we see the argument. Then next thing the reader sees is they're flying to California.*

*To this point, the most difficult thing to write about is emotions and how they affect individuals. Here, we witness the "what" of the situation. We need to feel the "what" of the situation. Is mom happy dad's taking you away? Is dad humbled by the humiliating comment about money? How does that all go down? The most important element of the story was completely overlooked in that jump from the last argument to the airport. We, the reader, need to feel the lost, the displacement, the fear that they are all going through.*

*You have a lot going on here. You have a wonderful beginning. With some real introspection and thought, you can come up with a wonderful story.*

*Good luck.*

**Summary:** *My fifty-thousand word count novel is the story of twelve-year old Gabby, six years after her parent's divorce. Gabby tells the story of the year her mom changed her family, again, with a boyfriend named Mike and a sister named Annie.*

### **Flying Home**

My name's Gabby.

I'm twelve.

My parents are divorced.

Some people think that means I'm ~~some kinda kid~~, you know, a kid of divorce (*which*) means you're doomed. Your life is over because your parents can't get along.

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It's not good, don't get me wrong, but divorce happens. ~~What I know is that it~~ *It* doesn't have to be the thing that is you; it's just something that happens *in this life*. My mom says mistakes can make a life. She wrote a song for her fourth album with that title.

~~That's what~~ I know *that*, now. But I didn't always.

*betto*  
I was only six when my parents split. Things weren't great in my house, but what did I know? I was only a kid. And I didn't have a brother or a sister to talk to about how I felt.

When me and my dad and my mom lived in Boston, our house was the funnest on the street. Mom is the singer in a band, and after I was born they moved the studio to our house so she could be home, more. There were always people around and music playing, and to me it was like living in a magic land. ~~To Dad, it felt a little different.~~ *(Dad felt differently about it, though.)*

*He* *Even though he* was finishing a degree in theology at Harvard, *but* he took care of me. I had a few babysitters, who I liked a lot. There was Betty and Kelly and Cheri and Christina and Tori, but I liked it best when Dad was home.

My parents fought about everything; the music being too loud, the strangers in our house, and how Dad didn't have enough time to get his work done. Mom was away so much. But the real fights, the ones that mattered, were always about me.

I used to think my parents fought all the time because my mom is so dramatic and my dad is so calm. They are like oil and water, or fire and ice, or good and evil. And whatever it was that drew them together ( $\frac{1}{2}$ ). ~~it~~ *It* also ruined my family.

The last fight they had, the one that ended it all, came the day after Mom left me at home. She'd forgotten it was her day to take me to school. Dad left first that morning, then Mom got up and left, too. No one woke me up and when I came down to breakfast, the kitchen was empty so

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I just made myself a bowl of cereal and read a book. I was okay, really, until Dad got home and found me there, unexpectedly.

He wasn't calm when he called Mom.

When Mom got home I was sent upstairs.

From the top of the staircase I couldn't see them in the kitchen, but I heard every, single word. I sat with my knees held tight to my chest and my pink, fuzzy blankie stuffed under my nose. I remember that the hallway felt cold and dark and I wanted to wrap my pink blankie around my heart. I didn't understand what was going on, and I felt really scared sitting there, all alone. *(Good paragraph. Portrays the most devastating time in a kid's life without over doing it. Good)*

Dad said, "How could you have forgotten her today? Are you so important that our only real responsibility, our daughter, slips your mind? What is wrong with you!?"

I remember wanting to disappear ~~under my blankie~~.

Mom said, "What do you do all day,? ~~you~~ You shouldn't need me to babysit her."

Dad said, "What do you do ~~all~~ that is ~~so much~~ more important than her? More important than us?"

From the top of the stairs I heard the words that changed my family forever. *(From this statement, the reader should know exactly what those words were.)*

My mom didn't say that she was sorry for forgetting me. She didn't say that we were the most important people in her life. She didn't seem remember that she'd forgotten us so many other times that year.

Instead my mom said *(those words that ended it all:* "I spend my days making money."

~~Then, there was~~ silence.

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~~That was the last fight.~~

That was the fight that ended my family.

*(you need a transition here. Update the reader on the passage of time between the fight and the departure. How difficult was family life during that time?)*

In the middle of first grade Dad took me on a plane across the country to live with my Zaydie, my grandfather, in Seattle. ~~And we left~~ Mom *stayed*(,) by herself(,) in Boston.

I remember holding Mom's legs, standing in front of the ticket counter in the airport. ~~She wasn't crying.~~ *When* I looked up through my tears, *I saw that she wasn't crying.* Her face was hard to read. Dad told me to say good-bye and that I'd call her when we got to Seattle.

Mom's long blond hair was pulled back into a loose ponytail(.). ~~and she~~ *She* wasn't wearing any make-up that day. Mom, well, she's a lot of things I don't want to be, but she is beautiful, on the outside. Even then, in the airport, on the day that couldn't have been good for her either, she looked so pretty. And I can still see the people(*men, guys?*), the blurs around us, stopping, for just a second, to look at her.

Trying to say the word good-bye is surprisingly hard when you're six. ~~and nothing~~ *Nothing* seems right. I couldn't get my mouth to make any sound. I was crying so hard that people in the airport were turning to look at us, not just Mom. Mom kept saying, "Gabby, it's okay. You have to go. I love you." But I could barely breathe when I turned and ran back to my dad.

Dad pulled me up, into his arms, and we walked through the airport security. I never looked back in Mom's direction.

~~It was the worst day of my life.~~

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*Until this summer, when something happened that made me rethink everything I'd ever thought about my mom and me and love. (This isn't a sentence. See if you can reword it. Perhaps: Something happened this summer that made me rethink everything I thought about my mom, and me, and love.)*

JULIE

MIDDLE GRADE EXCERPT – GIRLS I LOVE BEST BY JOYCE GERBER

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Flying Home

My name's Gabby.

I'm twelve.

Don't start with this.  
Don't introduce self.  
Weave this in later.  
Have Dad address her by name.

Start here. My parents are divorced.

Some people think that means I'm some kinda kid, you know, a kid of divorce means you're doomed. <sup>that</sup> Your life is over because your parents can't get along.

It's not good, don't get me wrong, but divorce happens. <sup>now</sup> What I know is that it doesn't have to be the thing that <sup>defines</sup> is you, it's just something that happens in this life. <sup>redundant</sup> My mom says mistakes can make a life. She wrote a song for her fourth album with that title.

<sup>redundant</sup> That's what I know, now. But I didn't always.

I was only six when my parents split. Things weren't great in my house, but what did I know. <sup>7</sup> I was only a kid. And I didn't have a brother or a sister to talk to about how I felt.

When ~~me and~~ <sup>and</sup> my dad <sup>and</sup> my mom <sup>and</sup> lived in Boston, our house was the funnest on the street. Mom is the singer in a band, and after I was born they moved the studio to our house so she could be home <sup>more</sup>. There were always people around and music playing, and to me it was like living in a magic land. <sup>#</sup> To Dad, it felt a little different.

He was finishing a degree in theology at Harvard, but he took care of me. I had a few babysitters, who <sup>m</sup> I liked a lot. ~~There was Betty and Kelly and Cheri and Christina and Tori,~~ but I liked it best when Dad was home.

Delete unless they play major roles later.

JULIE

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I used to think my parents fought all the time because my mom is so dramatic and my dad is so calm. They are like oil and water, or fire and ice, or good and evil. And whatever it was that drew them together, it also ruined my family.

The last fight they had, the one that ended it all, came the day after Mom left me at home. She'd forgotten it was her day to take me to school. Dad left first that morning, then Mom got up and left, too. No one woke me up and when I came down to breakfast, the kitchen was empty so I just made myself a bowl of cereal and read a book. I was okay, really, until Dad got home and found me there, unexpectedly.

He wasn't calm when he called Mom.

When Mom got home I was sent upstairs.

From the top of the staircase I couldn't see them in the kitchen, but I heard every, single word. I sat with my knees held tight to my chest and my pink, fuzzy blankie stuffed under my nose. I remember that the hallway felt cold and dark and I wanted to wrap my pink blankie around my heart. I didn't understand what was going on, and I felt really scared sitting there, all alone.

Dad said, "How could you have forgotten her today? Are you so important that our only real responsibility, our daughter, slips your mind? What is wrong with you!"

I remember wanting to disappear under my blankie.

Mom said, "What do you do all day, you shouldn't need me to babysit her."

I thought it was a ride to school. Who gets her from school?

Choose one!

see p. 3

Age 6-7

Didn't cry?

Didn't go to school?

Didn't call parent or house?

What hour?

Why want to disappear?

What she is up there listening?

that

What hour?

Wouldn't she need TLC - 2 hugs, 20 apology, 2 cuddle from Mommy?

7/13

JULIE

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Dad said, “What do you do all <sup>day</sup> that is so much more important than her? More important than us?”

From the top of the stairs I heard the words that changed my family forever.

My mom didn't say that she was sorry for forgetting me. She didn't say that we were the most important people in her life. She didn't seem <sup>to</sup> remember that she'd forgotten us so many other times that year.

Instead my mom said, “I spend my days making money.”

Then, there was silence.

*Did one of them leave the house or go upstairs?*

That was the last fight.

That was the fight that ended my family.

*Choose one. see p. 2*

In the middle of first grade Dad took me on a plane across the country to live with my Zaydie, my grandfather, in Seattle. And we left Mom, by herself, in Boston.

I remember holding Mom's legs, standing in front of the ticket counter in the airport. She wasn't crying, when I looked up through my tears. Her face was hard to read. Dad told me to say good-bye and that I'd call her when we got to Seattle.

Mom's long blond hair was pulled back into a loose ponytail, and she wasn't wearing any make-up that day. Mom, well, she's a lot of things I don't want to be, but she is beautiful, on the outside. Even then, in the airport, on the day that couldn't have been good for her either, she looked so pretty. And I can still see the people, the blurs around us, stopping, for just a second, to look at her.

Trying to say the word “good-bye” is surprisingly hard when you're six and nothing seems right. I couldn't get my mouth to make any sound. I was crying so hard that people in the airport

*Did they recognize her?*



Julie

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were turning to look at us, not just Mom. Mom kept saying, “Gabby, it’s okay. You have to go. I love you.” But I could barely breathe when I turned and ran back to my dad.

Dad pulled me up, into his arms, and we walked through the airport security. I never looked back in Mom’s direction. Really?

It was the worst day of my life.

Until this summer, when something happened that made me rethink everything I’d ever thought about my mom and me and love.

I AM INTRIGUED BY THIS LAST LINE.  
WHEN DOES SHE SEE HER MOM AGAIN?  
WHAT IS THEIR CUSTODY ARRANGEMENT?  
DESCRIBE A MEAL, A FAMILY EVENT, OR AN  
OUTING WITH HER PARENTS TO PAINT A SCENE  
OF THEIR DAILY LIFE.  
ILLUSTRATE HER CLOSENESS WITH DAD.  
WHAT KIND OF CONTACT HAS SHE HAD WITH  
MOM THESE SIX YEARS?  
ARE HER PARENTS CIVIL TO EACH OTHER?

MIDDLE GRADE EXCERPT – GIRLS I LOVE BEST BY JOYCE GERBER

*Summary: My fifty-thousand word count novel is the story of twelve-year old Gabby, six years after her parent's divorce. Gabby tells the story of the year her mom changed her family, again, with a boyfriend named Mike and a sister named Annie.*

Ed

**Flying Home**

My name's Gabby.

I'm twelve.

My parents are divorced.

Some people think that means I'm some kinda kid, you know, a kid of divorce means you're doomed. Your life is over because your parents can't get along.

missing word?  
↓  
like  
couldn't? ^

It's not good, don't get me wrong, but divorce happens. What I know is that it doesn't have to be the thing that is you; it's just something that happens in this life. My mom says mistakes can make a life. She wrote a song for her fourth album with that title.

That's what I know, now. But I didn't always.

I was only six when my parents split. Things weren't great in my house, but what did I know. I was only a kid. And I didn't have a brother or a sister to talk to about how I felt.

When me and my dad and my mom lived in Boston, our house was the funnest on the street. Mom is the singer in a band, and after I was born they moved the studio to our house so she could be home more. There were always people around and music playing, and to me it was like living in a magic land. To Dad, it felt a little different.

He was finishing a degree in theology at Harvard, but he took care of me. I had a few babysitters, who I liked a lot. There was Betty and Kelly and Cheri and Christina and Tori, but I liked it best when Dad was home.

- very real
- good display of emotion without showing it in our face
- was it ever good between the parents? the contrast might be interesting

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My parents fought about everything; the music being too loud, the strangers in our house, and how Dad didn't have enough time to get his work done. Mom was away so much. But the <sup>doing what?</sup> real fights, the ones that mattered, were always about me.

I used to think my parents fought all the time because my mom is so dramatic and my dad is so calm. They are like oil and water, or fire and ice, or good and evil. And whatever it was that drew them together, it also ruined my family.

The last fight they had, the one that ended it all, came the day after Mom left me at home. She'd forgotten it was her day to take me to school. Dad left first that morning, then Mom got up and left, too. No one woke me up and when I came down to breakfast, the kitchen was empty so I just made myself a bowl of cereal and read a book. I was okay, really, until Dad got home and found me there, unexpectedly.

He wasn't calm when he called Mom.

When Mom got home I was sent upstairs.

From the top of the staircase I couldn't see them in the kitchen, but I heard every, single word. I sat with my knees held tight to my chest and my pink, fuzzy blankie stuffed under my nose. I remember that the hallway felt cold and dark and I wanted to wrap my pink blankie around my heart. I didn't understand what was going on, and I felt really scared sitting there, all alone.

Dad said, "How could you have forgotten her today? Are you so important that our only real responsibility, our daughter, slips your mind? What is wrong with you!"

I remember wanting to disappear under my blankie.

Mom said, "What do you do all day, you shouldn't need me to babysit her."

↓  
it's not "babysitting" when it's your child: I think he would jump out last word

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Dad said, "What do you do <sup>e</sup> all that is so much more important than her? More important than us?"

From the top of the stairs I heard the words that changed my family forever.

My mom didn't say that she was sorry for forgetting me. She didn't say that we were the most important people in her life. She didn't seem <sup>to</sup> remember that she'd forgotten us so many other times that year.

Instead <sup>1</sup> my mom said, "I spend my days making money."

Then, there was silence.

That was the last fight, <sup>because</sup>

That was the fight that ended my family.

← move about this: silence after arguing can be scarier than the arguing

<sup>After that...</sup> In the middle of first grade <sup>1</sup> Dad took me on a plane across the country to live with my Zaydie, my grandfather, in Seattle. And we left Mom, by herself, in Boston.

I remember holding Mom's legs, standing in front of the ticket counter in the airport. She wasn't crying, when I looked up through my tears. Her face was hard to read. Dad told me to say good-bye and that I'd call her when we got to Seattle.

Mom's long blond hair was pulled back into a loose ponytail, and she wasn't wearing any make-up that day. Mom, well, she's a lot of things I don't want to be, but she is beautiful, on the outside. Even then, in the airport, on the day that couldn't have been good for her <sup>1</sup> either, she looked so pretty. And I can still see the people, the blurs around us, stopping, for just a second, to look at her.

Trying to say the word <sup>!!</sup> good-bye <sup>!!</sup> is surprisingly hard when you're six and nothing seems right. I couldn't get my mouth to make any sound. I was crying so hard that people in the airport

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were turning to look at us, not just Mom. Mom kept saying, “Gabby, it’s okay. You have to go. I love you.” But I could barely breathe when I turned and ran back to my dad.

Dad pulled me up, into his arms, and we walked through the airport security. I never looked back in Mom’s direction.

It was the worst day of my life.

Until this summer, when something happened that made me rethink everything I’d ever thought about my mom and me and love.

# Jenni's Comments

## MIDDLE GRADE EXCERPT – GIRLS I LOVE BEST BY JOYCE GERBER

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### Flying Home

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I'm twelve.

My parents are divorced.

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~~Divorce happens. But don't get me wrong, it's not good. It's not good. don't get me wrong. but divorce happens.~~ What I know is that it doesn't have to be the thing that is you; it's just something that happens in this life. My mom says, "Mistakes can make a life." She wrote a song for her fourth album with that title.

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Dad said, "How could you have forgotten her today? Are you so important that our only real responsibility, our daughter, slips your mind? What is wrong with you!"

Comment [PHS 1S1]: Why? Was she on tour?

details?

Comment [PHS 1S2]: How old was she? Six?

Comment [PHS 1S3]: No need to say she was scared. The rest of the paragraph already shows us that.

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~~I remember I want~~ding to disappear under my blanket.

Mom said, “What do you do all day? ~~→~~You shouldn’t need me to babysit her.”

Dad said, “What do you do all day that is so much more important than her? More important than us?”

~~From the top of the stairs I heard the words that changed my family forever.~~

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**Comment [PHS 1S4]:** This is very interesting that mother would consider taking care of her own child as babysitting.

**Comment [PHS 1S5]:** Redundant. Don’t need.

**Comment [PHS 1S6]:** Like when? Give details.



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This is all back story, and you're telling us what happened, not showing us. If these events are important enough to take up your first four pages then rewrite them as scenes from the POV of Gabby when she is six and let the reader experience them right along with her as they happened.

Formatted: Font: Italic

Comment [PHS 157]: How many years later is it?